

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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More Local Adobes

On Friday we wrote of the most recently published book on early California Adobe houses entitled "Thirty-two Adobe Houses of Old California". The photographs in the book are reproductions of watercolor paintings made during the 1904 to 1909 period in Monterey and elsewhere in the state by Mrs. Eva Scott Fenyes. The paintings are now in the possession of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, the publishers of the book. We have already discussed the Jose Castro and the Fabian Barreto Houses. Two other Monterey houses are included in those chosen by the directors of the Museum for reproduction in the brochure.

The Sherman and Halleck Headquarters is the third in the group. This charming old adobe is perhaps one of the historic buildings most often chosen by painters and photographers to reproduce in whatever medium they might choose.

According to history it was in 1834 that Thomas O. Larkin, the first and only American Consul to Monterey, erected a small one-story adobe building which was later used by General H.W. Halleck as his headquarters. General W.T. Sherman is also said to have used the building as an office. The adobe is situated on Calle Principal next to the now famous Larkin House, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Toulmin. Halleck arrived in Monterey on board the U.S. ship Lexington on Thursday, January 28, 1847. He was a U.S. engineer, who was to be entrusted with the erection of fortifications at Monterey and San Francisco. He subsequently became a member of a law firm in San Francisco and was an authority on land titles.

William Tecumseh Sherman was a native of Ohio and a graduate of West Point. He served as an adjutant under the military governorship in California. Later during the Civil War he held the rank of general.

It may be a bit embarrassing to write about one's own home but the last of the four watercolor paintings reproduced in the booklet is the Soberanes Adobe or "The House With the Blue Gate," although it is listed as the Vallejo House in the Southwest Museum collection.

The following description is from the text of the booklet.

"One of the most attractive of Monterey's picturesque adobes is that known as 'The House with the Blue Gate,' situated on Pacific street between Franklin and Jackson Streets. To Miss Blanche Richardson, a descendant of the Soberanes family, we are indebted for the following information regarding the house.

"Rafael Estrada, the builder, sold the lot and house to Exequiel Soberanes who wed the daughter of Ygnacio Vallejo. Miss Richardson who is a title researcher, traced the abstract to the first title, which reads thus:

"On the twenty-second day of December 1841 there was granted to Rafael Estrada, a citizen, a lot of one hundred varas square, (situated) toward the rear of Mrs. Jorge Kinloch's house. Witness my hand, Manuel Castro, secretary."

"In 1849 Estrada was granted an additional one hundred varas in front of his house. The house was owned by members of the Serrano family, (Mrs. Jean Serrano, now a resident of Tucson) until recent years, when it became the property of Mr. and Mrs. William T. O'Donnell.

"The house contains six large rooms and two spacious halls. Its walls are thirty-three inches thick and the roof is supported by the original timbers. The original hand-made tile and some shakes form the roof covering."

Other adobe buildings in Monterey County listed in the booklet but not reproduced, and painted by Mrs. Fenyes are a small house near the Sargent Ranch, house built by Miguel Avila, Boronda House, Ylaria house, two C.C. Canfield houses, two of the Jose Castro home and a painting listed as the "Castro House" near Monterey, Colton Hall, Customs House, First Theatre, House of Four Winds, Fremont's Headquarters, House of Teodoro Gonzales near San Carlos Church, Thomas Larkin House, House with Monterey Cypress, House of Pink Adobe and Logs, Sargent House, Bonifacio House, Washington Hotel and Old Whaling Station.